

South Shore Estuary Reserve Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

August 6, 2019 10:00am - 12:00pm

Town of Islip

Long Island Maritime Museum

86 West Avenue, West Sayville, NY 11796

In attendance:

South Shore Estuary Reserve Office:

Jeremy Campbell

Christie Pfoertner

Rachel Neville

TAC Members:

Lane Smith, TAC Chair, New York Sea Grant

Corey Humphrey, TAC Vice Chair, Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District

John Tanacredi, Molloy College

Lou Siegel, NYSMEA

Kristin Kraseski, NYSDEC

Alexa Marinos, Town of Babylon

Emily Sweet, Town of Babylon

Kathleen Fallon, New York Sea Grant

Shawn Fisher, USGS

Nicole Maher, The Nature Conservancy

Maureen Dolan-Murphy, Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Tom Wilson, Stony Brook University SOMAS

Michael Bilecki, National Parks Service

Tara Schneider-Moran, Town of Hempstead

E. Christa Farmer, Hofstra University

Maureen Dunn, Seatuck Environmental Association

Jim Browne, Town of Hempstead

Kyle Rabin, LINAP

Meeting called to order at 10:13 am.

Review/Approve June Meeting Minutes

MOTION: pass April meeting minutes. Seconded. Approved.

SSER Presentation on Climate Vulnerability Assessment Options – Rachel Neville

Overview of the steps that lead up to an assessment. The main goal of today's meeting is to decide if the TAC would like an assessment to focus on the impact of climate change on the goals of the Comprehensive Management Plan or the resources of the Reserve. The National Parks Service is completing an assessment for Fire Island National Seashore, as well as the Peconic Estuary and Long Island Sound Study. Comparing FINS and PEP illustrates two different options that the TAC can choose from when deciding how to complete an assessment. FINS focused on resources and assets, including cultural resources, natural resources, and

facility assets. PEP was guided by the EPA method for conducting an assessment and focused on how climate change impacts the goals of the organization. The focus of both assessments as well as the process through which they were completed are different. The outcome of an assessment of the SSER will be dependent upon which option is chosen. The two options may overlap in some way and cover similar topics, and they may be different in some ways, possibly leaving out important aspects. An assessment on resources of the Reserve will require that a list of species be created. Many of these species are listed in the outcomes of the chapters of the CMP, showing potential for overlap. However, not all species are specifically mentioned in the CMP.

L. Smith: Goal is to ultimately create an RFP.

M. Dunn: The input for the assessment should come from the TAC.

M. Bilecki: RFP will need to be specific. If the contractor will help TAC with the ranking system, if adaptability will be included. The details will need to be included.

C. Pfoertner: Details for the assessment will need to be determined before the RFP process. A letter needs to go to Council with more details, before an RFP goes out. First step is to decide if the assessment will focus on resources or CMP goals.

C. Humphrey: It is difficult to talk about the goals of the CMP without first discussing the resources. Resources should be focused on first.

M. Bilecki: Resources are listed in chapters through the outcomes and goals. (Chapter 3 displayed on the screen illustrates this) If we use goals, this will be consistent with the other estuary programs. Consistency by using goals may be a good option.

M. Dolan-Murphy: Agreed with M. Bilecki on the idea to use goals.

M. Dunn: Agreed with using goals as the focus of a CVA. The CMP represents what we are doing, so how does climate change affect what we are doing, our goals.

N. Maher: Inclined to assess vulnerability of the goals in the CMP. It touches on resources, and many individual resource assessments have been done.

K. Rabin: Could we propose to focus on the goals but also cross it with resources to identify areas where there may be gaps?

C. Pfoertner: We can combine the two options if that turns out to be the best option. We are not guided by a specific method, like Peconic Estuary Program is with the EPA, so we have a little more flexibility.

N. Maher: Will the TAC need to go through each chapter to determine which outcomes are applicable to an assessment or will the contractor do this?

C. Humphrey: This would have to be specified in the RFP.

M. Bilecki: The detail of having a facilitator help the TAC go through and discuss the outcomes would be included in the RFP, rather than the group deciding which outcomes to use. This is part of hiring a group and a facilitator.

K. Rabin: We could task the contractor with going through every outcome. Each outcome could be impacted by climate change in some way.

N. Maher: Once the outcomes are analyzed, the TAC could weigh in and see if any areas were missed or were over or under-emphasized.

M. Dunn: The TAC could prioritize the outcomes and have a contractor in to facilitate that process. The TAC is a great resource.

C. Pfoertner: Is everyone in agreement that we are going towards goals? Does anyone not feel that way?

C. Humphrey: Is there a comprehensive list of resources available?

C. Pfoertner: We would have to develop this.

L. Smith: This could be habitat types, not specific species.

C. Pfoertner: We could add in specific species into a goal-oriented assessment.

T. Wilson: If CMP isn't used for the work we do, then why do we have it? If climate change is a significant challenge to meeting those goals, that works.

J. Tanacredi: To understand the risks we need to understand the habitat and inventory what is living. A substantial part of any program is the resources. This could be done with existing literature. We have tons of new work now related to resources. We need to look at it to see what resources are vulnerable and need to look at resources and identify them before you even do an assessment.

N. Maher: If we focus on goals and outcomes, we won't miss prioritizing how we need to look at natural resources.

M. Bilecki: (to J. Tanacredi) Are you proposing that as part of this process we step back and do a complete inventory of our resources then use that to conduct a CVA.

C. Pfoertner: Or maybe we include an inventory in our CVA?

J. Tanacredi: It is an important part of any risk assessment to have an idea of inventory.

J. Campbell: When the first CMP was completed there were more resources available. Resources are not the same now, so this needs to be streamlined and effective. We don't have the resources to do the level of monitoring being suggested. We need to address what the

vulnerability of this CMP is to climate change. Will it affect how we can achieve our actions and outcomes.

J. Tanacredi: There is information available related to species inventory, habitat suitability, habitat health.

J. Campbell: So, pulling information from that? Considering the existing information when doing the assessment, not completing a full new inventory.

J. Tanacredi: We could say in the letter that inventory is the foundation of habitat health and that gaps, which have been identified, will need to be filled in once the vulnerability is established and goals clarified.

T. Wilson: To what extent does climate change complicate achieving the goals in the CMP? Which goals of the CMP are most vulnerable to being compromised by climate change? Start with that then dig deeper. To characterize it we may need to fill in gaps.

M. Bilecki: So, everyone agrees that the goals of the CMP is the direction we want to go in for the assessment?

C. Humphrey: As long as one of those goals is to identify those gaps.

M. Bilecki: Do we want to look at the various scenarios of climate change?

J. Campbell: We will follow the state's range.

L. Smith: So, we will address the goals of the CMP and how vulnerable they are to climate change.

Vote, all in favor.

C. Humphrey: With the inclusion of identifying areas of missing information.

N. Maher: Do we need to do anything else to draft a letter to the Council?

C. Pfoertner: Yes, we will follow step by step.

M. Bilecki: When do you think we will start working on the letter to Council?

C. Pfoertner: Before the end of the year maybe. We need to decide all the details that need to go into the letter.

T. Schneider-Moran: Do we just write a letter saying this is what we want to do, and this is the direction we want to go in?

C. Pfoertner: That is where the confusion came in. It was determined that we needed more details for the Council.

K. Rabin: We should have an outline in the next 2 weeks while it is fresh in our minds.

L. Seigel: Based on meeting minutes from last meeting, we should put a committee together to get the work done, instead of doing all the work in the TAC meetings.

M. Dunn: We have a subcommittee and wrote a letter.

N. Maher: Should we have a draft letter with questions to talk about at the next TAC meeting?

C. Pfoertner: We can draft a letter for the next meeting?

J. Campbell: Yes.

ACTION ITEM: Have a letter drafted for the next TAC meeting.

M. Bilecki: TAC members can look at the letter ahead of time and come to the meeting with questions and discussion points and maybe we can go through the letter at the next meeting.

C. Humphrey: We can comment on the letter via email.

NOAA Mapping of SAV in the Reserve – Jeremy Campbell

J. Campbell went out with NOAA and SOMAS staff to groundtruth for the SAV mapping project. 5 days of groundtruthing work. Results of the mapping show a lot of change, including more eelgrass in places, reductions in some places, and a change in species. The data presented is preliminary and could change. Eelgrass in Shinnecock Bay showed expansion. The estimated completion date is 12/31/19.

M. Bilecki: Was an additional goal of this to also see how aerial photography will be usable for mapping SAV?

J. Campbell: This will help show how aerial assessment can be done with aerial photography. It will show how data around large events and storms changes. There is not much data on impacts on SAV from Sandy. This will provide more consistent data.

J. Tanacredi: This is exactly the type of inventory activity that needs to be identified. You have just done enough to deal with this one particular issue that could go into a vulnerability risk assessment at some point in time. This is the type of information that is out there, whether its NOAA or other federal agencies, this is what's necessary. Now you can determine whether it is recovering area, the amount of density in a particular site. It would mean a whole different thing if there was none. At the inlet I would doubt there would be any eelgrass because they are mostly submerged aquatic vegetation, it has to do with hydraulics and hydrology, and this is exactly what you need to start to identify an inventory. This is what monitoring does, why it is important to have data.

M. Bilecki: The goal was to see if there was a reduction in what was present in 2002 and how much of a reduction is seen.

J. Campbell: We would like to investigate doing annual SAV monitoring. SSER has an MOU with NOAA to do a flyover again after 5 years.

T. Wilson: What is the cost of an overflight vs. groundtruthing? It may be useful to do an overflight once a year. If you see a big change, then groundtruth.

J. Campbell: The problem with aerial surveys is brown tide. The growing season of eelgrass coincides with brown tide and the window for the aerial surveys was limited.

Other Business

M. Bilecki: What became of the conversation about the idea of funding the tide gauges?

J. Campbell: Pulled proposals from USGS and SUNY Stony Brook to get funding behind it to support it. It is good to have tide gauges and the water quality information from those stations.

J. Campbell has been working on it and hopes to move it forward.

M. Bilecki: The NPS is seriously looking at funding a gauge at Watch Hill.

L. Smith: Do we have a draft proposal?

J. Campbell: Have been running it past DOS.

N. Maher: Has been asked about the SSER local assistance grants, specifically related to West Brook Dam. Is there any information on that?

J. Campbell: That was done in 2017, we awarded 16 awards, no more than \$50,000 each. We hope to get something out this year. Very late summer, early fall, before the end of the year.

L. Smith: Any updates on the West Brook Dam?

M. Dolan-Murphy: Individual groups have supported that the dam be kept open, but no letter has been officially sent from SSER's TAC.

K. Rabin: The latest LINAP newsletter focuses on SSER initiatives. LI Estuary day is coming up in September and the newsletter is preceding that by focusing on the three estuaries.

C. Pfoertner: The SSER office has several events coming up that we will be attending, not events that we are hosting.

M. Dunn: Seatuck has many intern projects going on. We are looking for a small grant for equipment. Long Island Sound Study buys equipment and lends it out, maybe the TAC can do something like this.

J. Tanacredi: NY State is continuing to issue permits and eliminates 135,000 animals each year (a reduction from 250,000 animals in the past). Working with NYS senators to have legislation to ban collection of horseshoe crabs for bait in NY. NYS has been declared by Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission as in poor condition for protecting horseshoe crab populations. Habitat is declining by 8%.

M. Bilecki: Suffolk County has been working on septic system projects. CCE has initiated a coalition for septic work at FINS. We had a meeting at Seatuck recently. There are many grants available for homeowners and need help getting the word out.

M. Dolan-Murphy: There is another meeting coming up at Saltaire.

M. Bilecki: The Fire Island Association is meeting again at Seatuck.

M. Dolan-Murphy: The Stewardship Award is still accepting applications for the next 2 weeks.

L. Smith: NY Sea Grant has a new director, Dr. Rebecca Shuford. Sea Grant is in the process of evaluating research proposals that were submitted.

T. Wilson: Stony Brook deployed a Slocum Glider, autonomous robotic vehicle. Also working on a storm chasing vehicle to be used on the South Shore. Installed a CO2 flux system at Shinnecock Inlet, working with Brookhaven National Laboratory.

L. Smith: Move to close the meeting.

C. Humphrey seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 11:47am.